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ABSTRACT

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were approximately 1.2 million women veterans (5 percent of all veterans) in the United States in 1996. Female veterans were 84 percent white, 12 percent black, and 4 percent Hispanic. Between 1987 and 1991, women accounted for 11 percent of persons separating from the military, a number that is likely to increase. Women veterans are usually younger and more educated than male veterans, and more than half of them served during peacetime. Because of their military experience, women veterans have the education, training, motivation, and skills demanded by employers. As civilians, about 100,000 women veteran officers work as administrators; 235,000 women veterans work in managerial and professional occupations; and 90,000 work in service-related occupations. Because of concern that women separating from the military are unaware of their benefits, the Women's Bureau of the U.S. Department of Labor has begun the following programs to help women veterans make the transition to the civilian labor force: the Women Veterans Training and Placement Program; the Forum on Women Veterans' Employment Issues: Preparing for the Year 2000; the Transition Assistance Program; and the National Summit on Women Veterans Issues. (KC)

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Facts on Working Women

U.S. Department of Labor
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OUTLOOK ON WOMEN VETERANS[1]

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, there were approximately 1.2 million women veterans, representing about five percent of the 23,822,000 veterans living in the United States in 1996. The states with the largest female veteran population in 1990 were California, Florida, Texas, and New York. The majority of women veterans in August 1995 (651,000) served during peacetime, while 573,000 were war veterans. These female war veterans included 173,000 Vietnam-era veterans and 400,000 other war veterans.

Data from the 1990 Census show that the female veteran population was 84 percent white, 12 percent black, and 4 percent Hispanic. For male veterans, the breakdown was 89 percent white, 8 percent black, and 4 percent Hispanic.

Between 1987 and 1991, women accounted for almost 11 percent of persons separating from the military. Unlike the male veteran population, which is projected to decline by about 28 percent between 1990 and 2010, the female veteran population is projected to increase by 17 percent, from 1,094,000 to 1,281,000 during that period.

Women veterans are generally younger than their male counterparts. The median age of women veterans is 46 years compared to 55 years for male veterans. About 30 percent of female veterans are under age 35 compared to only 10 percent of male veterans. There are no longer any Vietnam-era veterans under 35 years of age or any other war veterans under 55 years of age.

Not only are women veterans younger than their male counterparts, they are more educated--more likely to have graduated from high school and to have attended college.

[1] Female veterans are women who served in the Armed Forces during the Vietnam era, the Korean war, World Wars I and II, and all other service periods.

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Approximately 60 percent of women veterans attended college compared to less than half of male veterans. In addition, one in five male veterans does not have a high school diploma, while only one in ten women veterans hasn't graduated from high school.

Women veterans, as a group, because of their military experience, have the education, training, motivation, and skills demanded by employers. They fly sophisticated aircraft, maintain complicated machinery, develop new technical information systems, and keep track of millions of dollars of inventory around the world.

As civilians:

* About 100,000 women veteran officers work as administrators.
* More than 235,000 women veterans are working in managerial and professional occupations.
* About 90,000 women veterans work in service related occupations.

Nearly three-quarters of a million (724,000) women veterans were in the civilian labor force in 1996. Labor force participation rates for female veterans and female non-veterans were 58.3 percent and 59.9 percent, respectively. More than half (681,000 or 55 percent) of women veterans were employed. Their unemployment rate of 5.9 percent was just slightly higher than the 4.8 percent for female non-veterans.

Table 1
Employment Status of Women Veterans
Annual Averages, 1996
(in thousands)

Age	Civilian Noninstitutional Population	In Labor Force	Percent of Population	Employed	Unemployed Number	Unemployed Percent
Total, 20 years and over	1,241	724	58.3	681	43	5.9
20 to 24 years	54	40	74.7	37	3	8.5
25 years and over	1,187	684	57.6	644	39	5.8
25 to 34 years	278	220	79.1	205	15	6.7
35 to 44 years	312	257	82.3	239	18	6.9
45 to 54 years	138	118	85.1	115	3	2.5
55 to 64 years	116	63	53.8	59	4	6.2
65 years and over	343	27	7.9	27	0	1.4

Source: U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Unpublished Data, 1996 Annual Averages.

A continuing concern of the Women's Bureau is that women separating from the military are often unaware of their status as veterans, particularly if they have not been in combat. As a result, they fail to take advantage of a full range of benefits.

Recognizing that women require special assistance to transfer their military skills to the civilian labor force, the Women's Bureau has sponsored various initiatives over the past several years aimed at identifying issues and removing barriers affecting the successful transition of military women to the civilian labor force. For example:

Access to information as a critical need of women veterans was addressed by the Philadelphia Regional Office through the distribution of ***The Women's Bureau Job Search Information Packet*** to women veterans at separation centers in the area. In a period of 8 years, nearly 3,000 packets were distributed containing a wide range of information women veterans need to conduct a successful civilian job search.

The Women Veterans Training and Placement Program at the Everett Job Service Center of the Washington State Employment Security Department, sponsored by the Women's Bureau in conjunction with the Department's Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS), implemented a project designed to place women veterans in civilian jobs that related to their employment experiences in the military. At the end of the project, 35 of the 45 clients were placed.

The ***Forum on Women Veterans' Employment Issues: Preparing for the Year 2000*** was sponsored by the Women's Bureau to review the issues affecting employment opportunities for women veterans from the present through the year 2000.

Implementation of a Women's Bureau region-wide initiative on women veterans resulted in projects ranging from panel presentations, to research with the Veterans Employment and Training Service (VETS) on Puerto Rican women's participation in the military and their issues and concerns, to conferences and career fairs for women veterans and active duty female personnel.

Women veterans are often have multiple concerns: employment, health, housing, child care, to name a few. Their needs call for the intervention of more than one Federal or State agency. The Department of Labor recognizes this.

In response to the need to address multiple job-related issues of veterans, the ***Transition Assistance Program (TAP)*** was implemented and is sponsored jointly by the Departments of Labor, Defense, and Veterans Affairs (VA). TAP gives job-search assistance to armed forces members who are within 180 days of separation or retirement, through 3-day workshops at military installations. Such cooperative agreements are becoming the norm rather than the exception.

As a member of the Veterans' Affairs Advisory Committee on Women Veterans, the Women's Bureau actively supports women veterans' programs and initiatives at the inter-departmental and intra-departmental levels, gives testimony before Congress, and participates as a member of women veterans' organizations.

More recently, the Women's Bureau participated in a National Summit on Women Veterans Issues sponsored by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Center for Women Veterans in conjunction with the White House Office for Women's Initiatives & Outreach and the American Veterans of World War II, Korea, and Vietnam (AMVETS) (September 25-27, 1996).

The purpose of this Summit was to bring together veterans' service providers, federal agency representatives, legislative staff, and others to identify issues and concerns to the women's veteran community.

The objective was to prepare a formal document incorporating the issues and recommendations of the Summit working groups for submission to the VA, other federal and state agencies, U.S. Congress, and veteran service organizations for consideration in strategic planning.

The following issues were considered:

1. Economic and employment status;
2. Accessing benefits and services of the VA, other federal and state agencies, and veterans service organizations;
3. Transition/readjustment experiences following discharge or retirement from military service;
4. Discriminatory experiences of minority women in the military and veteran community and their impact on readjustment to civilian life; and
5. Gender issues that impact on the general well-being of active duty women.

We would like to thank the Veterans' Employment and Training Service, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the Department of Veteran Affairs, and the Women's Research & Education Institute for contributing to this fact sheet.